



LOCAL & SOCIAL SERVICES

Charlo School

Executive Summary—Conditions and Trends

Like most jurisdictions, Lake County has a myriad of local, state, and federal agencies providing services to its residents. The Flathead Indian Reservation overlaps with a large part of Lake County, adding another entity to the patchwork of governmental units. Any planning effort for local services will require a strong inter-governmental coordination component to provide cost effective and responsive services while avoiding the duplication of programs.

Rapid population growth in Lake County over the last decade has resulted in growth pressures on most local agencies. Fire and police departments have experienced an increase in calls and requests for ambulance and other services are rising. Additionally, the senior citizen population's substantial increase puts pressures on senior services. Despite increasing population, school enrollments have declined due to trends towards smaller families and a smaller percentage of young families living in the area.

Beyond growth pressures, agencies must respond to outside forces that influence how they provide services. Changes in the federal regulations affect the demands for home health visits and welfare services. State support of schools has decreased, placing more of the burden on local school districts. Health insurance reimbursements affect the type of services that are provided and have resulted in greater demand for outpatient treatment.

Agencies have had to respond to these pressures under the financial constraints of limited budgets and staff levels that are not keeping up with growth. Lake County's per capita spending for overall services lags behind neighboring counties. This trend is troubling, especially after the western Montana wildfires of 2000 when a number of homes were destroyed in surrounding counties.

One way agencies have responded to these new demands, while balancing budgets, is through the use of new technologies. The Lake County Sheriff's Office is implementing an enhanced 911 system, which relies on the mapping capabilities of Lake County's Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS has been in use since 1998. The St. Luke Healthcare Network is part of the University of Washington telemedicine network and St. Joseph Hospital has received a grant for teleradiology. All of the schools and libraries have internet access, with many schools having internet capabilities in the classrooms.

Growth and the inevitable change in societal forces will continue to challenge local agencies to evolve and to respond to these needs effectively. This evolution will require the cooperation, planning, technology, and innovation that is evident in many of the efforts that local agencies have already undertaken.

Government

Incorporated Areas

The three incorporated areas in Lake County are Polson, Ronan, and St. Ignatius. All three have a mayor-council form of government and provide administrative, police, code enforcement and public works services. Polson is the county seat and the largest incorporated town with a year 2000 population of 4,041. Ronan had a year 2000 population of 1,812 while St. Ignatius had a population of 788. Polson, Ronan and St. Ignatius have zoning ordinances, St. Ignatius has a growth policy and Polson has a master plan.¹ All three communities have public libraries funded in part by the city taxes.

according to the levies that local governing bodies establish annually. In addition to the city and county levies, there is the general school levy and levies for certain school districts. Lake County's per capita spending is somewhat lower than surrounding counties', while the mill levy was significantly higher than both Sanders and Missoula Counties', but lower than Flathead County's. Differences in spending needs vary according to population size, the type of services that governments provide and land development patterns. For example, on a per capita basis it is less expensive to provide police and fire protection services to compact urban development than to rural developments. A snap shot of selected

Table 6-1: Selected Information on Incorporated Towns in Lake County

Town	Type of Government	Full Time Employees	Per Capita Expenditures	Total Mills Levied
Polson	Mayor-Council (8)	27	\$356.03	\$99.55
Ronan	Mayor-Council (6)	10	\$269.33	\$80.07
St. Ignatius	Mayor-Council (4)	4	\$144.45	\$95.90

Source: Montana State University Local Government Center - City & County Profiles, November, 02

County

The State of Montana formed Lake County in 1923. There are three elected commissioners, with a chairman selected by the commissioners. In 2002, there were 138 full time employees on Lake County's payroll. Among the varying offices are the clerk and recorder, courts, sheriff, noxious weeds, planning, environmental health, roads and bridges, treasurer, superintendent of schools, office of emergency management and the assessor. Most Lake County offices are located in the Lake County Courthouse in Polson.

The primary source of tax revenue for local governments is property taxes. Lake County collects taxes for the various local governments

local government funding statistics is presented in Table 6-2.

Another factor in determining levies is the taxable value of land within an area. In 2002, the taxable value for land in Lake County was \$42,972,000. Government and Tribal lands held in trust are not included on the tax rolls. As the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes acquire more land and transfer these lands to trust holdings, it creates additional exempt lands. From 1994 to 1998, rising land values had offset some revenue loss due to properties being taken off the tax roll and the taxable land value even increased 15 percent during this period. Since 1998, however, there has been about a seven percent decrease in value because of a number of factors. Due to fluctuating national economic

¹ The terms master plan and growth policy both refer to long-range planning documents. In 1999 the Montana legislature passed Senate Bill 97 (now 76-1-601, MCA), which defines what a long-range plan must contain and calls such plans growth policies. The St. Ignatius Growth Policy meets this requirement while the Polson Master Plan does not.

conditions and a projected \$250 million state deficit for the 2003-2004 biennium, it is difficult to project the future financial health of the Lake County government at this time.

on the Flathead Reservation, ranging from housing to environmental review. Additionally, the Tribes administer at least 70 Tribal programs.

Table 6-2: Selected Financial Statistics for Lake and Surrounding Counties, 2001

County	Total Mills Levied	Mill Value	Per Capita Expenditures
Lake	90.51	\$42,972.38	\$327.51
Flathead	108.14	\$129,772.14	\$379.83
Missoula	125.67	\$142,223.00	\$466.77
Sanders	68.38	\$27,109.78	\$627.65

Source: Montana State University Local Government Center - City & County Profiles

State & Federal

The State of Montana and the Federal government maintain a number of regional offices in Lake County and are major local employers. State offices include Family Services, Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and the Health and Transportation Departments. Federal offices include the Indian Health Service, U.S. Postal Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Tribal

The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes reserved the Flathead Reservation through the 1855 Treaty of Hellgate. The Flathead Reservation includes parts of four Montana Counties (Lake, Sanders, Missoula, and Flathead). The main Tribal administrative offices are located in Pablo. Other Tribal facilities in Lake County include the Salish Kootenai College, Early Childhood Services (Headstart), Tribal Health and Human Services and the Salish Kootenai Housing Authority. The Confederated Tribes are one of the leaders in the nation in contracting programs with the Federal Government, allowing them to exert a great deal of local decision-making control. The Tribes manage more than 100 federal and state programs

Fire Safety

Volunteer Fire Districts/Fire Service Areas

Twelve volunteer fire protection districts (VFDs) provide fire protection throughout Lake County. The incorporated cities of Polson, Ronan and St. Ignatius provide fire protection within the corporate limits, as well as the surrounding rural districts. The Polson Fire District has a substation in Big Arm. The smallest districts are Hot Springs with 10 volunteers, and Swan Lake with 12 volunteers. Most of the districts have between 20 to 30 volunteers. The Polson Fire Chief/Marshall holds a full-time paid position, the only such position in Lake County aside from the Tribal Division of Fire program.

All of the fire districts and the wildland fire protection agencies belong to the Lake County Rural Fire Association. Under this Association, the VFDs purchase reduced-rate insurance and reinvest the savings into equipment upgrades. The County also has a Fire Action Plan, which identifies fire-fighting resources and lists contacts in the case of a fire. The Polson Fire Department is in the process of completing a 10-year plan that will look at renovating the fire station and purchasing new equipment. The State Fire Marshall office is a clearinghouse of information for fire departments and also pro-

vides fire investigators and inspectors as needed. The State Fire Marshall office in Kalispell serves the area north of Pablo, while the Missoula office provides services for the south part of Lake County.

Arlee 911 calls are dispatched through the Missoula dispatch center, and Ferndale and Bigfork 911 calls are dispatched through either Flathead or Lake County dispatch centers. The Lake County Sheriff's Office is in the process of upgrading to enhanced 911, and will rely on the Lake County GIS and the Planning Department to maintain the rural addressing system and maps for emergency services.

The number of emergency calls has increased significantly in recent years and as the population increases, this trend is projected to continue. In most areas, the districts are largely funded with property tax revenues, although some departments rely on donations. Fundraising, grants, loans and support from the State and Tribes are additional sources of revenue. Alternate sources of funding and staffing will have to be developed to serve the future fire protection needs of the expanding population.

While most of Lake County is covered by the VFDs or agencies that provide wildland fire protection, parts of the Swan Valley and Irvine Flats areas do not have any protection for private property structures. The map titled Fire Districts depicts those areas covered (and not covered) by the VFDs within Lake County.

A number of challenges make residential fire fighting difficult for the VFDs. Construction on the urban-wildland interface does not typically have adequate fire provisions. Such provisions include a defensible space around homes, fire resistant roof materials, and private roads wide enough for fire trucks to be used to access structures and maneuver effectively and safely. Additionally, the increased number of calls to the VFDs will eventually take a toll on the volunteers, who often have to leave work and home to respond to calls. For example, the

Arlee Fire Department, a volunteer service which responds to both ambulance and fire calls, currently averages over 40 calls per month. Another challenge has been a limited water supply. However, with the addition of two new wells in Polson and the six dry hydrants that have recently been installed throughout Lake County, there should be significant improvement in this area.

Wildland Fire Protection

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), the Tribal Division of Fire, and the U.S. Forest Service are responsible for wildland fire protection. These agencies respond to fires on public and forested lands but do not provide protection for private property structures. The Tribal Division of Fire, located in Ronan, has an agreement with the state to provide protection on forested fee land. The tribal unit also provides training for local fire departments. The DNRC is updating a Wildland Fire Management Plan for Lake County that contains information on fire history and procedures. The Natural Resource chapter of this document notes areas of Lake County where the DNRC is currently undertaking an inventory of fire risks. The Tribes are currently completing a Fire Management Plan for the Flathead Reservation.

Public Safety

Lake County Sheriff

The Lake County Sheriff's office has 20 officers. This department includes three school resource officers, one drug investigator, two detectives, ten deputies and the sheriff, undersheriff, and chief deputy. The Lake County Jail was recently expanded and can hold 41 inmates. Although Lake County is in the process of adding a youth detention cell, space needs are still inadequate with the jail frequently at full capacity. There are currently 15 full time detention officers and 2 part time officers. Patrol units are dispatched through the Lake County 911 cen-

ter. Additional resources for the Sheriff's office include a boat patrol, funded through donations, and two volunteer search and rescue groups.

City Police

Calls for the Cities of Polson, Ronan, and St. Ignatius are dispatched through Lake County 911. The cities also contract with Lake County for jail space. The Polson Police Department has 10 full time officers with 7 patrol units, while the Ronan Police Department has 4 full time and 5 part time employees with 3 patrol units. St. Ignatius has 3 full time officers, 2 part time employees and 3 patrol vehicles.

Tribal Police

The Tribal Police Department and jail are located in Pablo. The department currently has three investigators, 15 officers, and 16 patrol cars. The Department has limited criminal jurisdiction over all Indians on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The Tribes maintain a dispatch center separate from Lake County's.

The tribal jail, located in Pablo, has a capacity for 20 inmates. Juvenile offenders are housed at facilities in Kalispell or neighboring counties. The Tribes have completed a needs assessment for new facilities that includes a jail with capacity for 48 adult inmates and a sepa-

rate juvenile facility with a capacity of 44. A timeline for building these facilities has not yet been established. There are three tribal juvenile probation officers and one adult probation officer. The Tribal Fish and Game Conservation Program enforces fish, wildlife, and recreation regulations on the Flathead Reservation. The agency has ten federally trained wardens.

State and Federal Agencies

In addition to local law enforcement agencies, there are a number of State and Federal Agencies that provide services and coordinate with local officials. The Montana State Highway Patrol provides traffic enforcement for State highways - primarily U.S. 93 in Lake County. The Highway Patrol maintains an office in Polson staffed by one sergeant and five officers. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the U.S. Forest Service provide wardens and law enforcement officers who enforce regulations on public lands.

Crime Statistics

Both the index crime rate and the overall crime rate for Lake County were lower than the statewide average. Within Lake County, however, Ronan had a significantly higher overall crime rate indicating a higher incidence of non-

Table 6-3: Lake County Crime Selected Crime Statistics - 2001

Location	Index Crime Rate (2) Per 1000	Overall Crime Rate (3) per 1000
Polson	No Report	No Report
Ronan	11.23	393.1
St. Ignatius	48.1	156.9
Lake County - Unincorporated Area	23.45	75.9
Lake County - Total	26.6	88.4
Montana	39.97	115.4

1) Source: Montana Board of Crime - 2001 Database

2) Index Crimes = Homicide, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, Burglary, Larceny, Motor Vehicle Theft

3) Overall Crime Rate = Index Crimes + All other crimes. All other crimes range from DUI, curfew, vandalism

violent/non-property related reports. St. Ignatius had a higher rate of index crimes compared to the state average.

The crime rate is based on reported crimes to the police or sheriff's office. The arrest or clearance rate on these reported crimes for Lake County is 64 percent. This compares favorably to the overall state rate of only 34.7 percent. This is good news in light of the fact that during recent planning meetings throughout Lake County, the public has repeatedly stated that public safety is one of the top priorities.

Libraries & Museums

Libraries

Polson, Ronan, St. Ignatius and Arlee have public libraries. The Polson, Ronan and St. Ignatius libraries are members of the Tamarack Federation, a regional organization that reports to the Montana State Library Commission. This district includes 13 members and covers western Montana from Libby to Hamilton. Interlibrary loans are available through the Montana State Library system.

The service area for local libraries includes the towns plus the surrounding area. Polson City

Library has the largest service area population. Of libraries in the state with a service population over 10,000, Polson has the largest percentage of the service population that are registered users. Polson also exceeds the average collection size per capita (which includes books, video, and audio recordings) for libraries its size. The Montana average is 2.98 per capita, while Polson is at 3.57 per capita. The libraries in Ronan and St. Ignatius are below the per capita collection size average of 3.75 for libraries of their size.

Polson has full time staff while Ronan and St. Ignatius have part time staff. Per capita spending corresponds directly with use. Circulation at the Polson library is double the average for similar sized libraries in Montana, while St. Ignatius and Ronan have among the lowest per capita usage in the state. For libraries of similar size, the Polson City Library's per capita spending is slightly less than the state average while the Ronan City Library's spending is comparable to the state average. However, the St. Ignatius Town Library has one of the lowest per capita spending levels of any library in the state. Since 1998, all libraries have upgraded to high-speed internet connections and have added public access internet computers.

Table 6-4: Lake County Library Facts

	Polson	Ronan	St. Ignatius
Service Area Population	11,789	8,765	5,953
Registered Borrowers	7,200 (61% of population)	5,422 (62% of population)	910 (15% of population)
Per Capita Collection Size	3.57	2.07	3.19
Hours Open per Week	41	38	42
Per Capita Circulation	5.65	2.46	1.02
Per Capita Spending	\$13.88	\$15.58	\$3.11
Internet	DSL - 4 Access PCs	DSL - 6 Access PCs	T-1, 12 PCs (At School)

Source: Montana Public Library Annual Report of Statistics, July 2000 through June 2001, Montana State Library

Note: St. Ignatius statistics reflect the public library and school library resources combined

In addition to the public libraries, the Salish Kootenai College has a library that is available to all Tribal members, non-Tribal members who live on the Flathead Reservation, and students. The library has a collection size, including books, audio, and video, between 45,000 and 49,000 and also has internet access, interlibrary loan, and several medical databases. It also has a Tribal collection that contains material related to local history and interest as well as an American Indian collection. The library is part of the Montana State Library system.

Museums

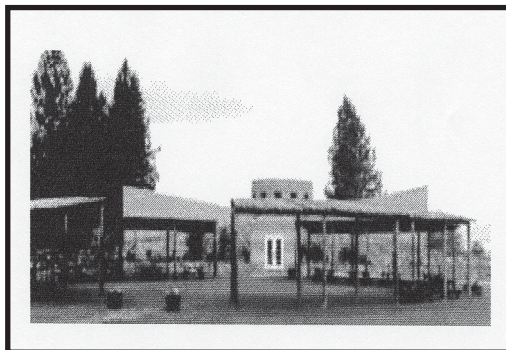
Museums offer many educational opportunities and celebrate the culture and history of a region. As attractions for visitors, museums also contribute to the local economy. State and federal agencies, as well as non-profit organizations, operate museums throughout Montana. The museums in Lake County offer a variety of experiences including fine arts, tribal culture, pioneer history, and historic preservation. Table 6-5 presents a list, description, and the locations of museums in Lake County.

Table 6-5: Museums in Lake County

Name	Description	Location
St. Ignatius Mission Church	Founded in 1854 by the Jesuit Missionaries. Includes the church that is noted for its murals and frescos and preserved log buildings from the mission.	St. Ignatius
Miracle of America Museum	Public Non-profit museum with over 100,000 artifacts of Americana and a pioneer village.	Polson
National Bison Range Visitor Center	Displays and exhibits on bison, including history and habitat. Information on the Bison Range. Managed by USF&WS.	Moiese
The People's Center	Tribal museum, public education center & gift shop for the Flathead Indian Reservation.	Pablo
Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana	Displays include western art, beadwork, historic photos, saddles and weapons	Charlo
Polson - Flathead Historical Museum	Exhibits and artifacts displaying the history of Polson and Lake County.	Polson
Sandpiper Gallery	Nonprofit community organization to promote fine art and artists in Lake County. Located in the Polson Library building.	Polson
Garden of the Rockies Museum	Includes early church, antique stores, barber shop, doctors office, & schoolroom.	Ronan

Source: Compiled from "Montana Cultural Attractions", www.travel.state.mt.us, November, 02

The People's Center in Pablo



Education

Schools K-12

Lake County has eight public school districts, of which, three are independent elementary school districts, and five are public high school districts. In addition to the public schools, there are five private schools as well as a significant number of home-schooled children. The Tribes operate the Two Eagle River High School in Pablo for Tribal members and descendents of Indian tribes. All of the schools have internet access.

Statewide enrollment at the elementary school level, after climbing for more than ten

has an enrollment of only six students. Polson, on the other hand, is experiencing increasing enrollments at the high school and elementary levels. Overall, the percentage of students enrolled in private schools or home schools has also increased during the last decade from five to ten percent of the student population.

Elementary school spending per student in Lake County declined from approximately \$6,000 per student in 1990 to about \$4,000 per student in 1996. This reflected a statewide trend. Concerns with physical plant age and overcrowding are widespread. For example, in 1999 a bond issue to fund an addition to the high school and rebuild

Table 6-6: Lake County School Enrollments

School	90-91	93-94	97-98	02-03
Elementary (K-6)	2462	2721	2672	2358
Middle (7-8)	654	738	793	765
High School (9-12)	1174	1238	1388	1342
Non-Public Schools	217	330	468	485
Total	4507	5027	5321	4950

Source: Office of the Lake County Superintendent of Schools, 2002

years, is now declining. Meanwhile, the high schools experienced an increase in enrollments as prior elementary swells have moved to the upper grades. This trend reflects the national pattern of the baby boomers' children reaching school age and advancing through the system. Lake County is no exception to this trend, with enrollments for the elementary grades peaking in the mid-90s and then declining in subsequent years. Overall, enrollment in the County peaked in 97-98, has started to decline in recent years and is expected to continue at levels below the late 1990s for the near future.

Declining enrollments at Swan Lake Elementary have forced the students to be bused to Bigfork. Due to its isolation, Salmon Prairie

the middle school was passed in Ronan.

Post-Secondary

Salish Kootenai College is a Tribally affiliated college located in Pablo. The College offers Associate Degrees, Bachelor of Arts Degrees and certification and apprenticeship programs. The programs are continuing to expand in an effort to meet the needs of students and employers. Enrollment has steadily increased over the last five years from 874 in 1994 to a total of 1,059 full- and part-time students in the fall of 2002. About two-thirds of the students are enrolled full-time and about three-fourths of the students are American Indian. The college also offers job training through the Kicking

Horse Job Corps Center and has a Tribal Business Assistance Center. A new science building is under construction. Enrollments for the near future are projected to remain steady.

The University of Montana Biological Station at Flathead Lake, established in 1898, is the oldest active biological research station in the United States. It offers a variety of field-oriented courses in ecological and teaching disciplines for upper level undergraduate and graduate students.

Other post-secondary opportunities within commuting distance include Flathead Community College located in Kalispell (about 53 miles North of Polson) and the University of Montana in Missoula (approximately 40 miles south of St. Ignatius).

Health Care

Hospitals

St. Joseph Hospital, located in Polson, currently has 22 operational beds and is licensed for 40. The hospital provides inpatient, surgery, emergency room, physical therapy, and home health services. A major construction project, was completed in 2000 that replaced the demolished 1933 wing. The new wing houses all of

emergency room visits and surgeries have increased since 1998. The hospital has increased its admissions through increased efficiencies without increasing staff. Due to the changes in the Federal eligibility criteria, there was a dramatic decrease (-45%) of home health visits in 1998.

The St. Luke Health Network in Ronan includes a hospital, long term care facility, clinic and home health services. The hospital is a 20 bed facility with 75 beds in the long term care facility. The hospital has inpatient, surgery, emergency, physical therapy and related services. The medical staff includes 9 doctors and a physician's assistant and nurse practitioner. The health network employs 300 people.

While inpatient admissions at St. Luke have remained steady over the last few years, outpatient and surgery numbers have increased. A new addition for the hospital will add two operating suites and space for CT scans and dialysis. A new clinic now consolidates two existing clinics into one building. As the population increases in number and average age, and as the local medical community increases its capacity to serve the public, it is anticipated that patient visits will continue to increase in the coming years.

Table 6-7: Lake County Hospital Selected Statistics

Services	St. Joseph (Polson)		St. Luke (Ronan)	
	1998	2001	1998	2001
Inpatient Admissions	686	1058	1,593	1509
Outpatient visits	19,468	21,573	27,886	28,979
Emergency visits	3,808	4,695	5,432	5,783
Surgeries	458	777	Not analyzed	478

Source: Interviews with St. Joseph and St. Luke Hospital personnel

the existing patient care facilities plus intensive care, surgery, additional physician offices and emergency services.

St. Joseph currently employs 122 people including a medical staff with 12 doctors of various specialties. The number of admissions,

Ambulance

The Arlee, Charlo, and Ronan VFDs provide ambulance service or operate quick response units for their areas of Lake County. The Condon, Bigfork, and Lakeside/Kalispell districts also provide emergency services to Lake

County residents. The Polson Emergency Company is a privately owned ambulance service that provides emergency response for the City of Polson and surrounding area. The map titled Ambulance Service Areas shows the customary response areas for the various emergency response units. The County 911 center dispatches ambulances. As the number of calls increases, the volunteer departments may soon need to consider bringing in a private service with full time paid staff. Air ambulance service is available from Kalispell and Missoula.

Public Health

The Lake County Public Health Department, located in Polson, provides family and personal health services for residents of Lake County. Services include immunizations, family planning, well child, communicable disease control, health promotion, and nutrition. Tribal members receive health services from the Tribal Health and Human Services Department. The main Tribal health center is in St. Ignatius and offers dental, pharmaceutical, and limited clinical services. Other centers in Polson, Ronan, Pablo and Elmo offer dental services along with visits by a nurse practitioner. Nursing services are also available in Arlee.

Social Services

Aging

The Lake County Area Agency on Aging is an advocacy and service organization that

serves a five-county area including Lake, Ravalli, Mineral, Sanders, and Lincoln Counties. The agency contracts with state and federal agencies to provide nutrition services at senior centers as well as homemaker services, counseling, and transportation services. Senior centers that serve both Tribal and non-Tribal members are located in Polson, Ronan, Charlo-Moiese, St. Ignatius and Arlee. Funding comes primarily from the Federal Older Americans Act and the Montana Older Americans Act. The Tribes also operate community centers in each of these areas as well as in Elmo.

Public Assistance

The caseload for public assistance in Lake County increased from 1990 to 1997. The Aid to Families with Dependent Children was a welfare program until 1997 and the caseload steadily increased to 539 cases in its last year. In 1996, the program was replaced with the Families Achieving Independence in Montana (FAIM) and changes in requirements resulted in a decreased caseload. The program is now called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and number of cases from 1997 to 2000 has remained steady. Food stamp assistance and Medicaid cases, however, have increased. Other programs include energy assistance and daycare assistance.

The Tribes have operated a welfare-to-work program for members of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes and their family members

Table 6-8: Lake County Caseload for Various Public Assistance Programs

Program	1997	2002
FAIM/TANF	389	336
Food Stamps	938	1320
Heat Assistance	Not Analyzed	79
Child Care	Not Analyzed	144
Medicaid	2861	3130

Source: Montana Dept. of Public Health and Human Services, Statistical Report, - Aug. 2002

since 1999. This program assists approximately 50 percent of Lake County's overall welfare-to-work caseload, and focuses on providing work-related skills and finding jobs for its clients. Unlike many of the reservations in Montana, there is a five-year lifetime eligibility limit for welfare benefits on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The average caseload is approximately 100 clients per month, with the greatest number of applicants requesting assistance during the winter months (Teresa McDonald, personal conversation, 3/28/00).

At this time projections for future public assistance needs are unavailable, although it is safe to assume that the caseload is not likely to decrease substantially.

Disabled & Special Needs

The increase in the overall population has resulted in a subsequent increase in the number of special needs individuals in the population. According to the 2000 Census the number of people with disabilities accounted for about 18 percent of the population. The age group over 65 years had the largest proportion of people with disabilities. Facilities to assist persons with special needs include the Mental Health Center in Ronan, The Tribal Human Services Department, and the Family Crisis and Resource Center in Polson. As the population increases, the needs for disabled and special needs services are likely to increase correspondingly.



The Lake County Health Department offices in Polson.

Local and Social Services

Goals and Objectives

Policy Statement

Lake County will strive to work with other governments and public and private agencies to anticipate, identify and respond to the public's safety and services needs.

The goals and objectives provided below were developed by comparing the conditions and trends described in the previous text with public input and the experience of local officials, planning board members and staff. The purpose of this section is to provide a vision of how the community intends to grow (goals) and state the specific steps Lake County intends to take to ensure the goals are achieved (objectives).

After each objective is a phrase or group of phrases in italic print. These phrases indicate the specific tools that Lake County intends to use to achieve the objectives. The tools are described in the implementation section of this document.

1. Goal

Work cooperatively with municipal, tribal, public and private services providers for the common good. The service providers include natural resource agencies, transportation authorities, fire districts, solid waste management personnel, public safety organizations, water and sewer districts, school districts, medical service providers, elderly and child care providers and others.

Objectives

- A. Establish and maintain open lines of communication including attending organizational meetings. (*Intergovernmental cooperation and citizen participation*)
- B. Collaborate when working together has a greater likelihood of achieving common goals than would acting alone. (*Intergovernmental cooperation and citizen participation*)
- C. Require development proposals that impact public and private agency resources to include and address comments from agency personnel prior to approval. Require developers to mitigate the impacts of development so that service providers may maintain a high level of service. (*Subdivision review*)

- D. Continue to provide tribal entities with opportunities to comment on development proposals and include those comments in board and staff decisions when appropriate. (*Subdivision review*).

1. Goal

Ensure that police protection, ambulance, fire safety and school district concerns are addressed and measures are implemented to protect residents and property in all areas of Lake County.

Objectives

- A. Require verification that emergency response and school district personnel can effectively serve all new subdivisions. (*Subdivision review*)
- B. Require that new development projects in the urban-wildland interface have an adequate water supply nearby, include defensible spaces around homes, have alternate ingress and egress when appropriate, are adequately signed, use appropriate construction materials, and include other measures to protect public safety. (*Subdivision review*)
- C. Act as a clearinghouse for information relating to fire safety and development. (*Public education*)
- D. Require that new development projects help offset the equipment costs of providing service to the residents in an equitable manner. (*Subdivision review and impact fees*)
- E. Channel dense population growth to areas where public safety and school busing services already exist in order to quickly and efficiently serve residents. (*Capital improvements planning {CIP}, density map and subdivision review*)

3. Goal

Provide for widespread public access to library resources.

Objective

- A. Explore funding mechanisms that would allow the public libraries to expand service to a wider range of people. (*Intergovernmental coordination*)

4. Goal

Promote and accommodate different types of housing, transportation options and routes, and medical and recreational facilities that serve retirees, seniors and other segments of the population.

Objectives

- A. Encourage the development of high and mixed density housing in close proximity to stores, medical and recreational facilities through the development of infrastructure and subdivision standards. (*CIP, subdivision review*)
- B. Encourage the creation of housing that is accessible for persons with disabilities by providing economic incentives including additional lots or reduced review periods. (*Subdivision review*)
- C. Plan for, build and link non-motorized transportation routes for recreational purposes as well as to provide routes connecting housing with commercial services. (*CIP and subdivision review*)
- D. Accommodate the provision of medical facilities and help provide efficient routes to bring ambulances to the facilities. (*Zoning and CIP*)

4. Goal

Facilitate the placement of safe and conveniently located child care services.

Objectives

- A. Provide flexibility in zoning regulations to allow for home occupations such as neighborhood child care services. (*Zoning*)
- B. Ensure that emergency vehicle access and other safety features are present in the design of child care facilities when reviewed by Lake County. (*Subdivision review and zoning*)